

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY

S E C R E T STATE 094829

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR SY XF US

SUBJECT: VISIT TO WASHINGTON OF SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER
KHADDAM

REF: STATE 92393

1. SUMMARY. IN OUR BRIEFING OF ISRAELI EMBASSY ON
KHADDAM VISIT ALONG LINES REFTEL, WE NOTED THAT THE
PRESIDENT HAD REITERATED HIS PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO HELP
GET NEGOTIATIONS UNDER WAY THIS YEAR AND THAT WE WERE
STRUCK BY KHADDAM'S SERIOUSNESS ABOUT SYRIAN COMMITMENT
TO SEE PERMANENT PEACE ESTABLISHED. KHADDAM HAD REVIEWED
KNOWN SYRIAN POSITIONS ABOUT BOUNDARIES AND CREATION OF
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PALESTINIAN STATE, ADDING PALESTINIANS HAD TO BE INVOLVED
IN PEACE PROCESS SO THAT THEY WOULD HAVE TO ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUTCOME. KHADDAM INDICATED ASAD WOULD DECIDE
IN LIGHT OF SYRIA'S OWN INTERESTS ABOUT SYRIAN PARTICIPATION AT GENEVA IF PLO REFUSED TO GO. WHEN THE PRESIDENT
STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS, KHADDAM
HAD SAID AGREEMENT BASED ON END OF STATE OF BELLIGERENCY

AND ESTABLISHMENT OF PALESTINIAN STATE WOULD CONSTITUTE TURNING POINT, AFTER WHICH SYRIA WOULD NOT GO TOWARD WAR. ON SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS, KHADDAM EMPHASIZED UNSC GUARANTEE OF MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON APRIL 26 BRIEFED ISRAELI DCM BAR-ON ON KHADDAM'S WASHINGTON VISIT. ATHERTON EXPLAINED VISIT WAS FIRST STAGE OF DIRECT PRESIDENTIAL CONSULTATIONS WITH SYRIA AND HELPED PREPARE WAY FOR MEETING WITH PRESIDENT ASAD, ENABLING LATTER TO REFLECT ON SUBJECTS THE PRESIDENT WOULD WANT TO DISCUSS WITH HIM.

3. ATHERTON SAID THE PRESIDENT REITERATED TO KHADDAM HIS PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO MIDDLE EAST PEACE AND TO GETTING THINGS MOVING THIS YEAR. THE PRESIDENT TOLD KHADDAM THAT AFTER HE COMPLETED FULL ROUND OF HIS MEETINGS WITH ARAB LEADERS--AND ATHERTON ASSUMED PRESIDENT ALSO WOULD WANT TO MEET WITH NEW ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER FOLLOWING ISRAELI ELECTION--U.S. WOULD REVIEW TOTALITY AND ASSESS AREAS OF DIFFERENCE AND AGREEMENT, AND WOULD CONSULT WITH ALL GOVERNMENTS CONCERNED ABOUT HOW WE COULD HELP BROADEN AREAS OF COMMON GROUND. THE PRESIDENT SAID HE WOULD PROBABLY ASK THE SECRETARY TO MAKE ANOTHER TRIP TO PULL TOGETHER RESULTS OF PRESIDENTIAL MEETINGS.

4. ATHERTON CONTINUED KHADDAM SAID NOTHING THAT COULD BE INTERPRETED AS CHANGE IN SYRIAN POSITIONS. U.S. SIDE WAS STRUCK BY SERIOUSNESS OF HIS APPROACH. KHADDAM STATED SEVERAL TIMES SYRIA WAS SERIOUS ABOUT ACHIEVING "JUST,
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STABLE AND PERMANENT PEACE." KHADDAM HOPED EVERYONE WOULD UNDERSTAND THIS REPRESENTED FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE FROM PAST ARAB ATTITUDES.

5. ATHERTON SAID THAT ON MIDDLE EAST PEACE ISSUES, KHADDAM HAD STATED PALESTINIAN PROBLEM WAS ESSENCE OF CONFLICT AND THAT IT WAS DIFFICULT FOR HIM TO IMAGINE ANY STABILITY IN MIDDLE EAST IF THIS WAS NOT SOLVED. KHADDAM ADDED IT WAS ESSENTIAL FOR PLO AS REPRESENTATIVE OF PALESTINIANS TO GO TO GENEVA. KHADDAM HAD SAID THAT UNLESS PALESTINIANS TOOK PART AND ACCEPTED RESPONSIBILITY FOR--AND HE UNDERLINED RESPONSIBILITY ASPECT--MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT, ONE COULD NOT BE SURE SUCH SETTLEMENT WOULD BE PERMANENT. U.S. SIDE ASKED KHADDAM WHAT SYRIAN POSITION WOULD BE IF PLO REFUSED TO GO TO GENEVA. HE REPLIED THIS WOULD BE NEW SITUATION, AND ASAD WOULD MAKE HIS OWN DECISION IN LIGHT OF SYRIA'S OWN INTERESTS. HE WOULD NOT RULE OUT THAT SYRIA WOULD GO TO GENEVA WITHOUT PLO.

6. ATHERTON CONTINUED, KHADDAM SAID THERE MUST BE INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE ON PALESTINIAN TERRITORY ESTABLISHED WITHIN FRAMEWORK OF ALL UN RESOLUTIONS. AS FOR ANY LINKS WITH JORDAN, IT WOULD BE UP TO PALESTINIANS AND

JORDAN TO DECIDE. ON TERRITORIAL QUESTION, KHADDAM SAID THERE COULD BE NO SURRENDER OF ANY TERRITORIES OCCUPIED IN 1967 "INCLUDING IN JERUSALEM."

7. ATHERTON SAID THE PRESIDENT, AS WITH OTHER ARAB VISITORS SUCH AS SADAT, SPENT CONSIDERABLE TIME EMPHASIZING IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONS WHICH WOULD EXIST UNDER PEACE, I.E., NATURE OF PEACE. THE PRESIDENT STRESSED THAT NORMALIZATION WAS CRITICAL FROM ISRAEL'S VIEWPOINT. KHADDAM REPLIED PEACE HAD TO START WITH END OF STATE OF BELLIGERENCY AND ESTABLISHMENT OF PALESTINIAN STATE, WHICH WOULD CONSTITUTE TURNING POINT. AFTER YEARS OF CONFLICT
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THERE WERE PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS WHICH WOULD HAVE TO BE OVERCOME, WHICH WOULD BE POSSIBLE ONCE AGREEMENT WAS ACHIEVED ON SUCH BASIS. SYRIA WOULD THEN NOT GO BACK TOWARD WAR, AND END OF BELLIGERENCY WOULD BE A STARTING POINT.

8. ATHERTON EXPLAINED THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING LASTED ONLY 45 MINUTES AND WAS CONDUCTED THROUGH INTERPRETER. THE SECRETARY HAD LONGER MEETING AND SOUGHT SYRIAN IDEAS ON RANGE OF QUESTIONS CONCERNING SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS--DEMILITARIZED ZONES, EARLY WARNING STATIONS, ETC.--AND WHETHER THEY WOULD BE APPLICABLE ON SYRIAN FRONT. KHADDAM DID NOT HAVE MUCH TO SAY. HE EXPRESSED VIEW MOST EFFECTIVE SECURITY ARRANGEMENT WOULD BE SECURITY COUNCIL GUARANTEE OF PEACE SETTLEMENT, WHICH HE EMPHASIZED. THE SECRETARY ALSO PROBED SYRIAN THINKING SINCE OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH SYRIA IN FEBRUARY ON ORGANIZATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR GENEVA. KHADDAM REITERATED POSITION THAT SYRIA PREFERRED ALL-ARAB DELEGATION. BAR-ON INTERJECTED QUESTION AS TO WHETHER KING HUSSEIN WAS NOT MAKING SAME POINT CURRENTLY. ATHERTON REPLIED HUSSEIN PREFERRED SINGLE ARAB DELEGATION BUT WAS NOT DOGMATIC, SAYING SOME ISSUES WERE MORE SUITABLE FOR BILATERAL NEGOTIATION.

9. BAR-ON ASKED WHETHER KHADDAM HAD DISCUSSED ASAD VISIT TO MOSCOW. ATHERTON REPLIED KHADDAM DID NOT HAVE MUCH TO SAY. KHADDAM STATED THERE WERE NO NEW ELEMENTS IN SOVIET POSITION ON PEACE SETTLEMENT. ATHERTON ADDED DISCUSSIONS WITH KHADDAM DID NOT GET INTO BILATERAL ISSUES. HE NOTED KHADDAM IN THESE TALKS WAS NOT AS COMBATIVE AS HE USUALLY WAS.
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